

GEO 101: Earth Systems Science I, Fall 2015

Course Information and Syllabus

Schedule: M-W-F, 12:00-1:00 pm

Location: 170 Fillmore

Email: seanb@buffalo.edu

Instructor: Dr. Sean J. Bennett

Office: 126 Wilkeson Quad

Office Hours: M 11:00 am-12:00 pm; W 1:00-2:00 pm

Course Description: Earth Systems Science examines modern environmental problems through quantitative methods, analysis, and modeling grounded in basic and applied science and research. The goal of the course is to introduce students to the fundamental processes that dominate the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere, their characteristics and complex interactions, and their impact on human life and society.

Course Learning Objectives

No.	Program Learning Outcome	Depth*	Specific outcome objectives for GEO101	Assessment instrument
1	Provide breadth of knowledge of basic principles and concepts	1	Provide a broad background of physical geography and the basic principles of Earth Systems Science	Exam 1
2	Provide depth within specialized areas	1	Understand the fundamentals of the energy-atmosphere system, global temperature, and atmospheric circulation	Exam 1
			Understand the fundamentals of atmospheric moisture, weather, water resources, and global climate systems	Exam 2
			Understand the fundamentals of plate tectonics and Earth surface processes	Exam3
			Understand the fundamentals of glacial processes, soils, ecosystems, and terrestrial biomes	Exam 4
3	Provide an understanding of experimental/research design and methodology	1	The scientific method will be presented and consistently applied in each written assignment	N/A
4	Develop approaches for integration of information	2	The course will address four major milestones (global atmospheric circulation patterns, Earth's climate, plate tectonics, and terrestrial biomes), which requires integration of many related concepts and principles	Exams 1-4
5	Encourage critical thinking and hypothesis building	1	Critically examine the role government policy plays in the environment, specifically with regard to the Clean Air Act and climate change	Exams 2 and 3
			Present the hypotheses for continental drift and the evidence in support of plate tectonics	Exam 3
6	Provide skills in writing and communication	0		
7	Provide contemporary information	1	Present and discuss relevant topics in real-time (e.g., weather phenomena, natural disasters, planetary exploration) using information available on the internet	Media discussions, video presentations
			Present case studies of local interest (e.g., Love Canal, Niagara Falls) as it relates to course material	Media discussions, video presentations
8	Encourage appreciation of scientific values	2	Apply the basic principles of atmospheric science, chemistry, physics, Earth science, and ecology to the understanding of topics relevant to society	Exams 1-4

*Depth: 0 - not covered; 1 - moderately covered; 2 - extensively covered

Required Textbook: *Geosystems: An Introduction to Physical Geography*, 8/E, Robert W. Christopherson, 2012, 688 pp., Prentice Hall, (ISBN-13: 9780321706225). **Please note: Any edition of *Geosystems* after the 3rd edition, including the newest version (9th ed.), will suffice.**

Course Format: Lecture presentations using computer-projected course notes and figures and complemented with computer animations, video recordings, and discussions of relevant Earth Systems Science issues. All lecture

presentations will be available on *UBlearns*, in both PowerPoint and PDF format, typically posted before the lecture. Note that animations will not work in PDF format.

Course Syllabus and Reading Assignments (based on the 8th edition)

Date	No.	Topic	Reading	Date	No.	Topic	Reading
8/31	1	Introduction & Essentials	1: 1-10	10/21	20	The Dynamic Planet	11: 314-329
9/2	2	Essentials of Geography	1: 10-35	10/23	21	Plate Tectonics	12: 330-343
		<i>Part 1: The Energy-Atmosphere System</i>		10/26	22	Plate Tectonics	12: 343-367
9/4	3	Solar Energy to Earth	2: 36-57	10/28	23	Weathering Processes	13: 368-385
9/7		NO CLASS—Holiday		10/30	24	Weathering Processes	13: 386-397
9/9	4	Earth's Atmosphere	3: 58-67	11/2	25	River Systems	14: 398-410
9/11	5	Earth's Atmosphere	3: 67-81	11/4	26	River Systems	14: 410-431
9/14	6	Earth's Energy Balances	4: 82-93	11/6	27	Eolian Processes	15: 432-457
9/16	7	Earth's Energy Balances	4: 94-105	11/9	28	Oceans and Coasts	16: 458-465
9/18	8	Global Temperatures	5: 106-127	11/11		EXAM 3: Topics 19 through 27	
9/21	9	Air/Sea Circulation	6: 128-139	11/13	29	Oceans and Coasts	16: 466-487
9/23	10	Air/Sea Circulation	6: 139-159	11/16	30	Glacial Processes	17: 488-499
		<i>Part 2: Water, Weather, and Climate Systems</i>		11/18	31	Periglacial Processes	17: 499-523
9/25	11	Atmospheric Moisture	7: 160-175			<i>Part 4: Soils, Ecosystems, and Biomes</i>	
9/28		EXAM 1: Topics 1 through 10		11/20	32	Geography of Soils	18: 524-533
9/30	12	Atmospheric Moisture	7: 175-189	11/23	33	Geography of Soils	18: 534-553
10/2	13	Weather	8: 190-204	11/25		NO CLASS—Holiday	
10/5	14	Weather	8: 205-221	11/27		NO CLASS—Holiday	
10/7	15	Water Resources	9: 222-236	11/30	34	Ecosystem Essentials	19: 554-565
10/9	16	Water Resources	9: 236-249	12/2	35	Ecosystem Essentials	19: 566-589
10/12	17	Global Climate Systems	10: 250-281	12/4	36	Terrestrial Biomes	20: 590-605
10/14	18	Global Climate Systems	10: 282-293	12/7	37	Terrestrial Biomes	20: 605-615
		<i>Part 3: Earth-Atmosphere Interface</i>		12/9	38	Earth and Humans	21: 616-623
10/16	19	The Dynamic Planet	11: 294-314	12/11		EXAM 4: Topics 28 through 37	
10/19		EXAM 2: Topics 11 through 18		12/16		Make-up Exams (ONLY), 11:45-2:45 pm	

Reading refers to chapter numbers and approximate pages.

Course Evaluation: Four exams, each consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions, and ten (10) “pop-quizzes” will be administered. Exams from previous years will not be made available.

Exams will be given on: September 28, October 19, November 11 and December 11 (refer to the table for the material covered by each exam). There will be no comprehensive final exam. The fourth exam on December 11 does not constitute a final exam; students will not be excused from this exam due to other academic commitments. The Instructor reserves the right to change the dates of the exams, the content of the exams, the syllabus, etc., should it become necessary. Exam results will be (1) emailed to your UB account, and (2) posted on *UBlearns*. For anonymity, the first 5 or 6 digits of your person number will be used as the identifier.

Ten (10) “Pop-quizzes” will be administered during the semester. Each quiz will be worth 1% of your total grade (a total of 10% of your final grade). The dates of these quizzes will be determined at the discretion of the instructor. “Pop-quiz” results will be posted and collated on *UBlearns*. For anonymity, the first 5 or 6 digits of your person number will be used as the identifier.

Student Performance

To promote class attendance and student performance, five mechanisms will be employed.

1. While the lectures will be posted on *UBlearns*, these will not contain all of the material presented and discussed. By attending lectures, students will be able **to obtain and construct a complete set of notes** for each topic.
2. A **study guide** will be prepared by the instructor to facilitate student preparation for each exam, which will be posted on *UBlearns*.
3. Class time will be allocated prior to each exam **to review** all material and to answer all questions.

4. By attending all lectures, students will be present for all “pop-quizzes” and should **earn full credit** toward their final grade.
5. I will **count only the highest three (3) exam grades** to determine your final grade. You may sit all four of the exams, and I will count the three (3) highest scores to determine your final grade (each exam will be worth 30% of your grade), or you may sit any three (3) exams of your choosing, assuming that the missed exam will be dropped from further consideration.

Make-up Exams: Any student missing an exam can sit a make-up. If a student can provide written documentation of severe illness or extenuating circumstance from a medical doctor or similar professional, s/he shall write a make-up exam comprised of multiple-choice questions (an “Excused Make-up”). All others shall write an exam comprised of multiple-choice and short-answer questions (an “Unexcused Make-up”). The Instructor reserves the right to refuse any documentation of illness or circumstance.

All make-up exams shall be administered on Wednesday, December 16, from 11:45 am to 2:45 pm in Fillmore 170. No exceptions to this date will be given. Failure to take a make-up exam on the prescribed date will result in a “0” grade for the exam, which may be used as the lowest score to be dropped to determine your final grade.

Grades: Below is a table that lists the range of percentages (first and second column) and the equivalent University letter grade (last column) I will use for grading. For example, should your weighted cumulative average for your top three (3) exams ($0.9 \times \frac{1}{3}(E_1 + E_2 + E_3)$; a maximum of 90%) plus your pop-quiz results (a maximum of 10%) equal 72%, you will receive a final grade of B– (72% is greater than or equal to 70% and less than 73%). All numerical grades will be rounded up or down to the nearest integer. The Instructor reserves the right to adjust the scores of any exam or the cumulative average, if necessary, to boost the performance of the entire class. This will be done numerically and of equal weight to every student. An “Incomplete” grade will not be given to students who have missed exams.

Greater than or equal to (%)	Less than (%)	Equivalent University letter grade
85	100	A
80	85	A–
77	80	B+
73	77	B
70	73	B–
67	70	C+
63	67	C
60	63	C–
55	60	D+
50	55	D
0	50	F

Classroom Policies: I shall follow and strictly enforce the *Obstruction or Disruption in the Classroom* policies as described in the Undergraduate Catalog (see <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/obstruction.shtml>).

Information about UB’s Accessibility Resources Office can be found here: <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>. All students wishing to receive assistance must register with that office.